

Academic Civic Engagement (ACE) Student Self-Reflection Guide

Use this “how-to” guide to think critically about what you have learned in your ACE class(es) as that learning relates to your personal and professional development.

What is ACE? Academic civic engagement (ACE) is a high-impact educational practice through a for-credit course or mentored public scholarship that enables students to apply academic knowledge and skills within a real-world context to address community issues and build the civic identity of all participants (students, faculty, community partners).

What is the value of ACE? ACE classes are valuable to students for learning course content, connecting academic learning to the real world, developing transferable skills (communicating with others, organization, etc.), growing as a citizen of the world, and discerning vocation and for exploring careers. College student interactions and assistance are valuable to community partners because they extend the capacity of the organization to benefit their constituents or the environment. Ideally, the exchange is of equal mutual benefit.

Why self-reflection? Reflecting on your ACE class(es) will enable you to understand better what they meant to you personally and will help you determine how to tell others about what you gained. These experiences often enhance self-understanding and prepare students for other opportunities. You may elect to use what you learn from this reflection in a resume, personal statement, interview, or fellowship. You may want to write in a journal about it or start a conversation with other people to help you gain more in-depth understanding.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Things to think about...

1. What most inspired me?
2. What challenged my preconceived notions, value system, or perceptions?
3. Which relationships did I develop that were most meaningful or instructive? Why?
4. What was personally most meaningful?
5. What would I want to do a second time?
6. What was most personally challenging to me? Why?
7. What did I not like about the experience?
8. What did I learn about my interests or limitations?
9. How did this experience make me aware of my positionality (race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, education, etc.)? Did the experience change my view of myself and others?
10. What sparked my curiosity or made me want to explore further?
11. How did this experience affect my career or vocational interests?
12. How did this experience affect my hopes and dreams for the future?
13. Did this experience change how I view my role as a citizen or community member?
14. How has this experience changed my sense of responsibility to my community, other people, society, or the world?

To Do's

- Add the ACE experience to your resume or personal statement. Think about the transferable skills that you developed (examples: communication, problem solving, creating, research, leadership, technical, etc.). If you need help, set up an appointment with the Piper Center for Vocation and Career or simply stop by the center during drop-in hours. Coaches or Peer Advisors will coach you through the process.
- Write a paragraph that tells the story of what you did and what you learned for future use. After you think about answers to the questions above, write a brief story that you could use in an interview to tell about what you learned. While you will want to tailor the applications of this learning to the job/fellowship/other opportunity you are applying for, having this story written down will help jog your memory.

Where will this lead me? After being inspired by an ACE class, students have gone on to these activities, among others:

- Continue to work for the organization in Off-Campus Work Study or a paid summer job
- Participate in International or Off-campus Studies Program
- Secure an internship with an organization in the same field as the ACE course, or one that serves the same audience
- Volunteer—either solo or as part of a student organization or other group
- Engage in public scholarship—academic internship, independent research (IR/IS), summer research (CURI)
- Take more ACE classes (See the Class and Lab search tool or the ACE website for a list)

Who else should I talk to? Sharing with other people helps clarify the meaning of what you experienced. They will enjoy hearing about what you did and will help you determine next steps.

- Your Professor
- Your Academic Advisor
- Coaches or Peer Advisors in the Piper Center
- Your Friends and Family

Contact

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- ❖ This document is also available online: <http://wp.stolaf.edu/ace/for-students/>